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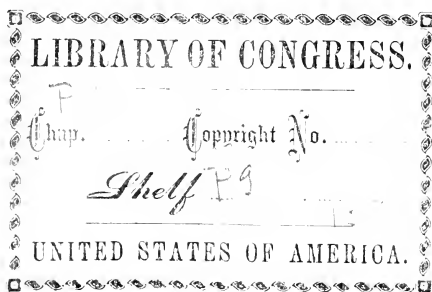
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ESTHER GRAY

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

MARY BRAINARD.



PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS:

GAZETTE STEAM BOOK AND JOB PRINTING HOUSE.

1871.

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TO

The Girls of Our Country

THIS LITTLE BOOK

IS

Affectionately Dedicated

BY

THE AUTHOR.

ESTHER GRAY.



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ESTHER GRAY.

MEMORY.

ONE wave-break on the long sand-stretch of time.

A minor key of that most mournful hymn
Which swelleth from creation to the close;
The life-throbs of a heart that throbs no more,
Footprints that may be seen—the feet are dust,—
The labor-marks of hands which are at rest,
While memory foldeth back her curtain-fold,
Take thou one glance; she too will go her way.

Fair Summer lay a dying. Esther plucked
A white Chrysanthemum from its low shrub:
Within her girdle placing it, she said,
"Thou wilt live longer thus above my heart
Than in the frost-touched garden. Die thou here."

A tall, plain maiden, such an one as you,
On crowded street, might pass without a thought,
Without the interest of a second glance;
But, met in country-walk or rural grove,
Would stop to study and soon learn to love.
Thought-lines, too deeply cut for that young brow,
That brow too large for woman, very full,—
Blonde, waving hair, just simply banded back,
Just simply wound in loose and shining coil.
What of the mouth? No calmness; no repose;
There lurks the tracery of a morbid soul diseased.

Firmness enough—yes, rather sternly set,—
The first thing you would notice is, Unrest.

What of the eyes? Why, either blue or gray,
I scarce can tell, the lashes are so long,
So fringe-like droop they o'er her roseless cheek.
She looks as she were weary, and would close
Them gladly to the earth, nor ope them more.
Oh, she hath raised them;—what a longing look!
Now they are filling slowly with great tears.
How through its prison-bars looks forth the soul!
This its unuttered language: “O, for wings,—
For wings to flee away and be at rest.”

What of the place? A home-like country scene:
Rose-bushes grow profuse, and Maple trees;

An ivy-vine, with tendrils clasping two
Between them, idly swinging to and fro,
Like heart divided, that hath plighted troth
To more than one, and so is false to both.
A border of carnations, marigolds;
A gravel walk strown full of autumn leaves;
Down in the tangled grass a tiny grave,
A mimic marble slab, and, such is life
And death. "MY BIRDY" written—children's work.
The farm-house was a noble mansion once,
'Tis now decayed, storm-beaten, weather-browned.
Down through an open window comes the drone
Of spinning; silvery-toned, a happy voice
Times to the steady buzzing of the wheel.
Across the street there stands a wide-doored barn,
And there's a farmer, rosy and sun-browned,
With loaded wagon, passing down the road;

The stir is very cheerful, now the sun
Sheds over all his warm benignant smile.
I wonder what did make her look so sad:
The merry singer up above seems more,
Far more in unison with time and place.

What of the day? A dreamy, autumn hush,
One of those hazy Indian-summer days;
Although the night before a death-blight came,
With icy hands, unrobing vines and flowers;
Yet now, at noon, you might have closed your eyes,
And fancied you were 'neath June bowers again.
Then, as they opened on the autumn haze,
The gold and crimson of the Maple trees,
The glimmering tinted sunlight sifted through
Revealing glory never seen in June.

WRECKED.

O WHAT a loss, when Farmer Allan Gray,
Surrendered to the demon Appetite
His manhood's reason and its self-control!
For, underborne by that exultant fiend,
So low, so low he sank that self-respect
Let go her hold upon him, and he fell
Where purity might never dare to come;
Where love, unventuring, only sighed and wept.
Alas! what risk as his unwary feet
Ventured across the God-forbidden line!
Long ere the precious ones who loved him most
Knew of his fall, the tempted, yielding, fell;
Though, sometimes, he in desperation stood

For weeks, and held his enemy at bay.
Again to fall, and lie in his despair
Dumb, like a victim underneath the curse.
Once he was giant-like in iron will:
Now weak and vascillating as a child.
Self-cultured he had been, and, from a boy,
Self-made, had risen till he won a place
Among the honored and the trusted few.
Still was he almost worshipped by his own,
And still would little trusting children come,
Smile in his face and nestle in his arms.
O wreck of manhood!—what a noble wreck!
How seamed and wrinkled o'er his massive brow.
How bowed his tall and once commanding form,
How had his brown locks whitened e're their time!
Once so esteemed that all his native town
Upon him looked her noblest citizen;—
Now school-boys ran and hooted. "Drunken Gray!"

If you had whispered in Rose Emory's ear,
When in her bridal-wreath and bridal-vail
She plighted faith to him, these fearful words,
“*A Drunkard's Wife!*”—she would have flung
 them back

In scorn; she would have bade you look upon
The man who stood beside her—ah, the MAN!
In five short years of blissful wedded love,
While in calm matron-beauty by his side,
And pure content, she walked, such words would then
Have called from her naught but a trusting smile.
But when upon the future, life had drawn
A few more lessons of foreboding love,
When baby Edie filled the house with glee,
An awful dread gained entrance to her soul,
That grew and grew, o'ershadowing the whole.
O, then in anguish would her lips have blanched,
And all the joy-light faded from her eye.

I've seen an oak;—among a grove of oaks,
Uplifting great green interwoven arms,
Whose leafless branch the still house seemed of death,
There never song-bird warbled, day by day,
Though southern breezes whispered love in June,
Because the roots sent no earth-juices up,
When down through life-cells came the call for food,
I said, "’Twere better far cut down than thus
’Mid life to stand a monument of death."

I stood upon the river-bank to watch
The drift-wood floating downward to the sea.
There was the commerce-vessel sailing by,
There was the pleasure-boat with joy-sails filled,
The fishers' nets, the Indian's rude canoe;—
But O, the drift-wood, dead-weight of the wave,
Sport of the wind and tide, driven to sea.

I passed a garden overgrown with weeds,
The nettle, and the night-shade, and the thorn;
Where poor dwarfed plants were 'shamed to lift the
head.

I hung my head in sympathy, and said:
"Accursed the slothful whose this garden is."

I from a rock gazed out upon the sea.
Toward shore, wind-borne, dismantled by the storm,
The old hulk of a vessel drifted by;
The captain and the crew were sleeping low,
Engirt with sea-weed in their ocean bed.
'Twas over-lettered with departed hope,—
That cypher, which unraveled may not be,
Except by hearts which sent it forth in vain;
Except by hearts where hunger unappeased
Still gnaweth, like the worm that dieth not.

O, drearier than the lightning-riven oak,
More useless than the drift upon the tide,
More deadly than the night-shade and the thorn,
O, emptier than the old hulk floating by!
Thou wreck of manhood, standing on the shore,
We watch thee drifting to a shoreless sea,
We know thee interwound by loving hearts,
Which bleed, and break, and moan as moans the sea.
The Christ-love reacheth thee his nail-pierced hand,
Thy brother-man in pity casteth ropes,
But fiends there are beneath to drag thee down,
And demon-hands to cut away the ropes.
So, dizzied by the maelstrom's rapid whirl,
So, deafened by the breaker's rush and roar,
Time's hour-hand strikes;—the lost soul hath gone
down.
From God's eternity back-echoes come,
To spoiled despairing love, gone down, gone down.

PICTURES.

MID-SUMMER, harvest-season, afternoon,
Near golden sunset; and a fair-haired girl
With luncheon-pail in hand walks o'er the field.
Toil-wearied binders down beneath the shade,
Glad of a respite, doze away an hour.
The maiden and her brother saunter off
And stand upon a rock beside a spring,—
A spring so clear the white-winged cloud above,
The willow-fringe around the water's edge,
The oak-bough, and the bird upon the bough,
Lay picture-like, a silent world within.

“O, Esther!” said the boy, “how can I stay?
Thus 'shamed I cannot lift my head in town.

Last night, with father helpless on my arm,
Whose insane mutterings, idiotic stare,
Pressed even heavier weight upon my heart
Of mingled pain and pride, and wild desire
For hiding, though it be within the grave.
Then passed me Lucy and those stranger girls,
A withering scorn-curl on their pretty lips,—
“Not Lucy Ames,” said Esther; “sure not her?”
“No; but she hung her head and looked away.
What have we done that cursing such as this
Comes down upon us and upon our home?”

She bowed in silence for a moment's space;
In pearl-beads from her hands the water-drops
Fell back in crystal beauty to the spring.
“See Edward, see how pure it is, and how
All 'round it and beneath it is black mud.

Still it keeps pure," she whispered, "it keeps pure.
To overcome this willful wayward heart,
To live so pure, to live all scandal down,
Are sermons I unto myself do preach;—
In practice falling, O, so far beneath,
Between fair promises and broken vows.
Last night within my soul a longing crept
For social hymns and holy words of prayer.
I passed that place, accursed, must needs look in:
There stood our victim parent at the bar,—
With trembling hand paid down his fee, a dime.
I'd coin my life for gold, and give it all
To bribe that man. Yes, I would be his slave
If he would pour his poison on the street,
And send my father home a sober man.
Volcano-like within me did uprise
The billowy flame of hate;—so fierce it was

To me it seemed that demons of the pit
Did stir the enkindled embers, till at last
I boldly questioned God, ‘Why let him live?’
So I dared not go in, but turned away
And walked home through the twilight cursing
him.”

From leaden sky, slow drops the twilight down
O’er trackless fields. A woman, worn and wan,—
Aye, pallid as the snow-enshrouded earth,
The cold white crystals slowly sifting down,
Enwrapping every tree and every shrub,—
Lay on her couch beside the window drawn.
Her eager eyes are gazing down the road,
And gathering round her lips a grieving look,—
A little maiden by her mother’s side.
Long shadowy curls o’erhanging crimsoned cheeks,

Whose wailing sobs and bitter bursts of grief,
Awake weird echoes in that silent room;
They two are all alone a little while,
The street-gate opens, and a haggard man
Comes stumbling through the snow-drifts to the door,
Supported by a fair-haired girl and boy.
He bursts with curses into that hushed room
Without one glance upon his dying love,—
His withered Rose, his fair grief-blighted flower:
Throws down himself in stupid, drunken sleep.
She wept great tears upon her dying couch,
She had hoped he would be himself once more,
To kiss away the death-dew from her brow.
She prayed, “O God, my worse than orphaned ones.
Be thou their Father; they are fatherless!”
Bring me the Book; my darlings open it:
This pledge you see; the hand that traced these lines

Shall with the heart that loved you, change to dust—

Just in the center of this Holy Book,

God's precious promises on either hand,

God's awful threatnings on either hand. ✕

I hoped your father would have signed this pledge,

The latest boon I asked of him on earth;

That hope denied me turn I now to you:

O children, write your names here under mine:

And now, with hands upon this sacred Book.

Vow, as you hope to meet your mother, vow

Eternal purity from that foul curse,

Eternal war to all the woe it brings.

They dug her a grave through the drifting snows,

They folded her weary hands over her breast.

So the earth sods fell, and her ears were closed

To the winter winds and the earth's unrest.

It is well, it is well; e're the soul wears out,

Like the heart and the hand, and the tear-dimmed
eye.

E're faith into weariness, waste, and doubt,

Drift to her ruin, 't is well to die.

ALONE.

THE worse than orphaned children, in their grief.

Their bitter lot of toil, together clung.

Unequal to his tasks, young Edward grew

Slender and tall. His school-days passed away

All unimproved, and heart-hopes unfulfilled

Upon him pressed, an incubus of woe.

But happy Edie was the joy of home,

The sweet-toned singer of the room above,
Whose bird-like trill kept time to spinning-wheel.
Edie? That means the gleam of sunshine bright:
Edie? That means the rill-song of the vale:
The bird that warbleth all the solemn night;
The honey-bee that gathereth all the day.
She paled in terror at her father's tread,
Awhile uncomforted for mother mourned;
But ere she knew it, came again the song.
And fairy laughter, ringing through the house.
'T were well there were more sunbeams in the world:
Too much we brood o'er that we cannot change;
We read "Cast all your care upon the Lord,"
We lay our burdens at His blessed feet;
We lay them down, then take them up again.
This world is full of burden-bearing ones,
Sad-browed disciples at the Master's feet;

Bereaved saints, up-gazing through the clouds,
Who, weeping, would recall their risen Lord,
That He may stand and multiply their loaves.
There is another class of human mind
Always, always alone, like mist-clad wastes,—
Like wilderness of untrodden solitude,
Like solemn twilight of some island cave,
Filled only by the ocean's wash and wail;
Like storm-tracked billow, and Sahara's sand.
Earth's nearest friendships have but paced around
The outer circle, while their lights have shone
But little way to center loneliness.
No ray can reach the inner temple-shrine
Till faith shall kindle up its altar fires.
'Tis terrible, this utter loneliness.
Is not this why so many walk in shade?
Do not we see it in their absent eyes?

We know it as we pass them on the street;
We feel it in the pressure of their hands;
Conscious our greeting reaches not the heart.
Earth-love enfolds them, but it warms them not.
Wealth flings his jeweled mantle over them;
What comfort hath it? It but weigheth down.
Fame lays her praise-wreathed crown upon their
brows;
What magic hath it that can banish pain?
Mirth reaches forth his hands to revelry,
Till wailed forth be the wise man's bitter cry,
“'Tis vanity of vanities.” No charm
Hath earth to cure the spirit's loneliness.
O soul, doth my words reach thee? Ask Christ in;
That niche unoccupied was left for Him.
No other stone will fill, no other can.
Thou and thy need may be in Him complete.

The care that came on Esther from a child,
Gave her a nature womanly and still,
Drew 'round her heart and life a proud reserve.
"While such a parent walks these streets," she said,
"What joy-companionship hath earth for me?"
Upon her stronger will-power Edward leaned,
The wise love-guiding of a sister soul.
For mother's sake, all daughter's duties were,
Without complaint, most tenderly performed.

HELP.

AMONG the reapers, one was called to rest
Whose harvest-sun dipped slowly to the sea
Of gold, far down upon the western sky.
Old and beloved, and full of useful years,

And blessing-crowned, he passed to his reward.
Another pastor came to them, heaven sent;
A faithful under-shepherd of the Lord,
With talent consecrate and love matured.
Long years before, this man and Allan Gray
Had been acquaint, in dear old college days.
Their lives, sun-mirrored streamlets side by side,
Went murmuring awhile, in unison sweet.
Then, Moorland-wastes and lonely, tangled wilds
Spread out between them, taking each his way,
Through separate sea-floods to the ocean wave.

Upon the street they met, and face to face
Gazed for a moment in each other's eyes,
Each feeling memory's fount most strangely stirred.
Then Allan Gray, with wondering cry of pain,
Fled from him, as one fleeth from a ghost

That backward bringeth from the buried past
The old familiar features of the dead.

'Twas told him that Rose Emory did sleep;
The Rose of his first love. He would have made
That dear one heart-companion of his life.
He loved in vain. He laid his joy-dreams by
And walked alone, save that he walked with God.

Alone was Esther Gray; 'twas nearing noon:
She with her morning tasks all cleared away,
Bathed in the winter sunshine, musing sat
In silence long. She had not sung of late.
It seemed the song-bird of her life had fled
In sorrow's ice reign from their death-robed bough.
For hours she pondered soul-tossed and depressed,
With inner questionings, "O, what is life?"

And why this wearing, trying life for me?"

The fountain of her tears did seem so full,

So near the surface, ready to o'erflow,

If but by chance a pebble should be thrown

Its tiny wavelets marking in the soul.

A shadow fell athwart the sunlit wall,

Within the door, ajar, the stranger stood.

"Forgive me, maiden," said he courteously,

"They said my old friend, Allan Gray, lived here."

A conscious flush suffused her cheek and brow;

"He is my father, sir," she simply said.

Her hand he clasped; "And you his daughter are.

I thought I read his features in your face.

I knew your mother in her sweet girl-days,

And would prolong the friendship to her child."

This mention of her mother was too much.

Down, past the flood-gate of her self-control,
Did passion's swollen torrent force its way.
"Thank God, thank God, my mother is at rest,"
And if I dared I gladly would die, too.
What hope-star is there on our sky of gloom;
How can we rise from under this dark cloud;
How face this world of utter heartlessness;
How crucify this bitterness of soul?
For those who wear the look and garb of men,
Yet busy at the tempter's damning work,
Drag down the one who should be our support.
See other girls, who have a father's care;
Such peaceful homes, such gleeful, careless hearts.
Once, years ago, I too, had hopeful dreams,
Upbreaching into glorious womanhood.
O, I would be so noble and so good,
So pure, so true; and glad all hearts should be

That in the world I lived, and lived to bless.
Air castles fallen; O, how soon they fell!
And now not even castles in the air
Lifts from the level of this stagnant gloom.”
The pent up grief of long despairing years
In silence brooded o’er, now finding way.
Forgetting they had never met before;
Unheeding when he kindly, wisely strove
To check her passionate vehemence, till
Subdued and trembling sank she on a chair,
Sobbing as deeply as if every burst
Would rend from breaking heart its hold of life.

He stood beside her, gently with his hand
Put back the moist hair from the swollen brow.
That good man, well acquaint with grief, had ne’er
Forgotten how its weird and wintry blast

Swept all his younger years with violence,
When cherished hopes and cherished joys went down;
When low, dusk vapor shrouded starry skies,
And clasped the midnight billows in its fold.
“Poor, ’wilderer, straying lamb,” he softly said,
“Thou know’st not half the tender Shepherd’s care.
He leaves the enfolded flock and seeks for thee,
On cold, dark mountains of thine unbelief.
Like Judah’s captive maidens, thou hast hung
By far Chaldean wave thy tuneless harp,
All broken and unstrung, thy harp of praise.
I tell thee, child, the Healer hath a balm,
The great Physician hath a cure for thee.
There’s resting in the heart that broke for thee.
There’s shelter in the folding of His love.”
For her and her’s the pastor knelt in prayer,
Till heavenly peace fell on the tempted one,

As if she touched the Master's garment-hem.

She rose and smiled.

Then in his hand she placed

Their time-worn treasure, mother's pledge and vow.

She said "Remorse so sits upon his soul,

Remorse and ruin, we have never dared

To place this Book before him, never dared

Within his hearing mention mother's name."

"My child," he said, "shall we not kindly try

By patient counsel and by every means

To save your father, my poor early friend?

Tell me your heart, as you have told this day,

But, O, be sure you tell it to the Lord,

Who giveth wisdom and upbraideth not."

Nor filial love, nor friendship's holy charm
Could turn the fallen from his cup of woe.
I told you there were fiends to drag him down,
And demon-hands to cut away the ropes;
I told you hearts with love-chords interwound
Must bleed and break and moan as moans the sea.

R U I N .

CAME May, the bridal month of all the year,
With soft, slow breezes burdened with perfume,
When still, deep azure ocean overhead,
Was so intense, so blue, the gazer lost
Himself in measureless infinitude.
How eyes did love to linger on the green,
The shaded green of meadowland and trees,

And on the violet-dotted river-bank.
 How robins sang among the apple-boughs,
 And bride-like cherry-trees—fair rivals they—
 How tulips grew enamored of the sun,
 Whose gold and crimson burned into their hearts,
 How to and fro her incense censer swung
 The lilac, with her paly-purple buds,
 Till every garden was a paradise,
 And every woodland was a scene of joy.
 O, what a time for sorrow most of all!
 I dally, for I dread to touch the woe
 That on the children fell those sunlit days,
 As Arctic travelers dread the ice-locked seas,
 As prisoners pace 'round the dungeon door,
 As summer hearts dread autumn chill and blight.
 Still prate I of blue sky and budding earth;
 Of bird and bee-song rill, and blossom-bough.

So does misfortune linger not but come
Surely as time on his uplifted wing,
Not hastening, and making no delay,
Grief's Juggernaut—o'er-riding bleeding hearts.
And did not joy-crowned summer say to grief,
"Fold thy dusk wings until my reign is past,
Bring not thy wailing into my May-days!"
Then grief made answer, "I His servant am.
I bring thee love-gifts, precious, hidden gems.
Upon my brow He placed a star-set crown,
And sent me forth to bless the sons of men."

'T was Sabbath sun-set, stilly, golden-hued;
And they had been alone since early dawn.
Beneath the maple shadow Esther leaned,
Beneath the vine-clad porch the children sat;
Above their mother's Bible murmuring low.

The Sabbath silence brooding o'er the earth,
 Had hushed to quietness, like blessing-hand.
 Of holy words, together read, they talked;
 These words: "I know that my Redeemer lives;
 Shall in the last days stand upon the earth."
 And then of mother's heavenly home and joy,
 Asking each other which should meet her first.
 And then, breeze-borne, the soft-toned evening bells,
 And then, the grove-bird's night-song trilling out.
 Half whispered Edward, and his blue eyes filled
 With tears of longing love, "O, I could die
 To see my precious mother once again,
 To feel her good-night kiss upon my brow."

Alas! can pen of mine depict the scene,
 The last earth-pang, the wasted life-hours close,
 When, in the very vortex of the pit,

He feels the flame unquenched within his soul!
When, through each quivering heart-nerve ringeth out
His closing knell of doom: too late! too late!
All they who knew Gray best had feared this long;
And he himself had feared it in the hours
When he, unstupefied by drink, could fear.
For often, in the silent, awful gloom
Of sleepless nights, his aching, unclosed eyes
Saw hideous forms imprint upon the wall,
In white, weird moonbeams, which he knew were not,
Yet, with warped vision, could not choose but see.
For, if he closed his eyes they were imprint
Upon the image chamber of his brain,
Till terror-driven, he tried, and tried to pray.
But treacherous memory gave no words of prayer;
Not e'en the child's prayer learned at mother's knee;
Though it did seem the name of Christ would drive

Those haunting visions from his sight away.

Alas! his lips with cursing long profaned,

And parched by torturing thirst, had not the power

Ere sunrise, he that morn had wandered out

Into the dewy freshness sweet and cool,

Among the early bird-songs of the grove,

Among the dawn-gold glimmering on the leaves,

Yet heard he not, yet saw he not:—His brain

Was filled with phantoms of disgusting things.

O'er moss-clad rock the poison viper crept;

Among the daisies slimy serpents hissed;

Out-shutting azure sky were dusk-winged bats.

Thus was it that a paradise was changed

To hell, because hell reigned in his own soul.

O, God! what thrills of joy, what pangs of woe,

Are souls of men created capable!

A kind of instinct led him to the haunt
Of his old revelings, a thought confused,
To find relief in his accustomed dram.
His vision would re-clear, re-string his nerves.
Vainly the Sabbath sun did pour a flood
Of radiant beams athwart that dingy room;
Vainly the morning breezes, spring-perfumed,
Crept in among the fumes of filth and sin.
Flushed with last night's debauch, the keeper stood
Behind his bar, his own best customer,
Stood glass in hand, as Gray came tottering in.
"Give me some brandy, give it to me quick!"
"First show me, have you wherewithal to pay?"
"Dare not deny as you desire to live!"
Spake Gray, all hoarse with passion and desire.
The keeper caught his bloodshot eye and quailed.
Glass after glass of liquid fire he drained,

Still fiercely, fiendishly demanding more;
 Till stupefied upon the floor he sank,
 Dead drunk. O, better that he had been dead.
 There he for hours in senseless slumber lay,
 When day toward evening drew, wild raving, woke:
 Then out into the gathering twilight gray,
 Just as the church-bell sent its call to prayer,
 With oaths and curses bandied back and forth
 In fearful interchange, from bolted door,
 They sent the foaming maniac to his home,
 The madman to his children motherless.

Laws of expediency, not framed in right,
 Where policy dares license man to sin!
God sayeth in eternal holiness:
 "Woe be to him who giveth neighbor drink,"
 But *man's* law granteth "for a price he may."

Shall such, O, God, have fellowship with thee?
The State that frameth mischief by a law—
God sayeth “Woe to him that riseth up,
And with strong drink and wine himself inflame.”
Man’s policy provideth him a place
In every town; nay, every city street,
Where no one shall molest or make afraid.
There is a judgment day; it draweth nigh;
There shall be that will plead, with mighty rocks
And mountain-crag, “O, hide us from the face
Of Him who sitteth on the judgment throne.”
O, love outraged, O, Lamb long suffering,
Well know I *all* stand suppliant at His bar,
But mercy reacheth not the case of some.
“He shall have judgment without mercy who
Hath none shown here; and mercy doth rejoice
Judgment against.”—This be the word of God.

Did not I tell you of a sunset hour,
 Of three fair children and a shaded porch,
 Of murmured words, low, gentle-toned and sweet?
 I said the boy, his earnest blue eyes filled
 With tears of longing love, exclaimed, "To die
 Were easy might I meet her once again."
 Just then the maniac father reached his home—
 Some demon surely must have guided him.
 Together drew the children in alarm
 And ready fear. Unclosed upon the step
 Lay mother's Bible, where her stiff'ning hand
 Had traced in death, "ROSE GRAY," upon the page.
 Enough of fading twilight still remained;
 His maddened eye just rested on the words.
 He clenched it, shrieking: "Have ye brought this
 here,
 'This name, to witness 'gainst me in my sin?"

Dog-like, he grasped the book within his teeth,
Tearing and scat'ring leaf by leaf around.
In mortal terror Edie, shrieking, ran
Adown the road. Edward sprang forward, tried
To wrench their treasure from his father's hand.
What was the boy in that fierce madman's grasp?
With one clenched fist felled instantly to earth,
With blows and curses rained upon him, till
All that young life, the life He gave, had fled;
Till in a death-like swoon poor Esther lay
Upon the murdered brother's stiff'ning form.

And thus they found them. Edie's terror-cries
Brought in the travelers who were on the road.
The one Squire Thorton was, the other one
A young physician lately settled near,
Paul Evans, "*Dr.* Evans," on his sign,

The new gilt-lettered sign above his door.
 The frenzied parent realized his deed,
 All fury over; horror stricken sank,
 Nor uttered he another word in life.
 Sometimes in death's convulsions struggling,
 Anon the life-tide seemed to ebb away,
 Away beyond the mist-folds shutting out
 The future from our ken; away, away;
 Till as the beast he died, without a hope.

A ruined soul! Well might the heavens hang
 Their high-arched dome with blackness, and the earth
 Put her fair bridal robes aside, and clothe
 Herself in sackcloth. A lost soul! Canst thou
 Count out its cost in precious gems and gold,
 Compute the interest through eternity?
 Conceive 'mid radiant beings round the throne

The glorified existence it hath lost?

Can'st tell us how the mind-powers might expand.

The deep thought-faculties might grow and grow?

Can'st map out heaven's dominions so that we

May realize their beauty and their bliss?

Unmask God's cypher and unseal His book,

And bid us gaze on fair foundation stones,

The jasper, topaz and the emerald;

Enter beyond the gates of pearl, and stand

On golden streets, enwrapt in temple-light?

Or, who hath sent us back a warning word,

Of banished souls who crowd the pit of woe,

Whose bitter, wailing echoes, reach us not;

That death-knell sounding with these awful words:

“Ye knew your duty, and ye did it not?”

In vain; the curtain never, never lifts.

And it is well. I would not peer beyond,
To be unnerved for life's stern duties here;
My watching, trusting trial-hours here.

Two coffins side by side in that still room—
The murdered, the rum victim, side by side.
For not more surely Edward's early life
By violence cut off in early prime,
Than was the father's, sacrificed by law.
A murderer, licensed and upheld by law.
Not only slew the body, but the soul.
O, the sin-poison that destroys the soul!

All gazers, gazing on this confined face,
Turned shuddering from the awful look it wore.
Those anguish lines were never smoothed away
Or softened into quietness by death.

Nor durst he print a lie-smile on those lips,
Not e'en the poor, faint glim'ring of a smile.
Few faces of the dead are seen without
A calmness, like the storm-lull quietude,
Which preacheth to the passion-heaving breast,
Distilling tear-showers, and the sobbing wail,
The rising grief-billows, "Be still, be still."
But this face said: "Wail on, O, burdened heart,
Beat, beat against thy prison, beat and break."
It said: "Fold, fold thy dove-wings, holy faith,
For hope is dead, and love, and murdered joy."
It said: "Flow on, O, bitter, briny tears,
Ye may not over-wail the ruined soul."

The other was so sad, a full young brow,
All seamed with ghastly marks of violence;
A look imploring, pitiful, congealed

Around the lips whose pleadings were out-crushed,
 Aye, swiftly silenced by vindictive death.
 Hands clenched, as if in agony, and eyes
 Half closed, as looking up reproachfully
 With questioning gaze to every human face;
 And over all, the cold white of the tomb
 Enfolding, vail-like, its mysterious fold.
 O, wasted life! My pen had traced these words,
 And then I paused, for oftentimes a soul
 Hath risen ere its noon from flaming pyre,
 Through seas of blood, from dungeon's deepest shade,
 And left behind the seedling of a field
 That after harvest waveth into gold.
 And oftentimes a life of four-score years
 This parting word hath wafted back to earth
 In woe-tones of regret, "Unprofitable!"
 Truth's noblest harvests were the victory-fields

Of death, whose soil by blood enriched, and tears,
Hath to perfection brought an hundred-fold.

Without, the day mocked on in festive green,
And, as they bore them o'er the velvet sod,
Star-gilt by butter-cups and dandelion,
Fair apple-blossoms fell like snow-flakes down,
Like tear-drops on the black pall of the dead.
Beneath the silence of the summer sod,
Grave-hidden, both the parent and the son,
With mother's bed, the violet-decked, between.
In after years those sweet spring violets
Spread over two, and one was blossomless.
Was it a curse?

AWAKENED.

HAVE you not wakened from some fearful dream
In haunting stillness of the midnight hour,
Felt dim, and undefined, and uncontrolled,
Lost vision-spectres roaming through your soul?
The dream forgotten, but still near the woe;
And all around you in death-semblance wrapped,
Each quick, hard heart-throb beating down your
 breath,
Great drops of agony upon your brow?
I ask, have not you wakened in the night
Trembling and faint from half-forgotten dreams?
You clasped the peaceful sleeper by your side
In closest fold, and so the even beat

Of that warm human heart calmed down your fear.
Or, were you all alone, you rising went
And sought companionship beneath the stars.
But, O, they were so far, so far away,
And looking down so distant and so cold,
As if your life with all its hopes and fears
Were nothing, nothing but a single grain
In some great wilderness of shifting sand;
An atom only in the sunlight seen;
The tiniest insect of the summer day;
Your life in time's great cycle but an hour.

You wandered out among the garden flowers,
But they had closed their petals when the sun
Shut down his golden gateway in the west.
Nor did they, as by day, smile back your smile,
And every one seemed weeping in its sleep,

For, tear-like, dew-drops weighed upon each leaf.
The night-wind sobbed and sighed among the trees.
The river-song seemed sadder than by day.
Sweeter and louder, sadder than by day;
From sombre woodlands half a mile away.
The night-bird sent his solitary cry,
Strange, mystic word-call of the whippoorwill.
Found you companionship among the flowers?

Thus, failing in earth-sympathy, you knelt,
With thought turned inward, circling your own soul.
And prayed, "O, Father, thou who art in heaven;"
And then in faith, "O, Father of my soul!"
Then, as prayer-struggle deepened into power,
Your heart cried "Abba Father!" and the word
Intensified its tone of tenderness.
As you in spirit felt His presence thrill.

His Holiness, as a bright flame of love
Enfolded you in glory and in warmth,
Above the seraph His Shekinah stood.
In vision you beheld It leave the throne,
And hailed Its coming. O, ye orbs of light,
This atom of existence shall live on
When your frail glories fade and pass away.
O, earth, our birth-place, sepulchre, and tomb.
This be thy spoken doom: "Reserved for fire."
Not from thy breast immortal soul-life sprang:
Its source was God, to God shall it return.

When from her death-like swoon the girl awoke,
Remembrance tarried, reason lay dethroned.
Bewildering fancy led her day by day,
Crowding the brain with strange, disjointed things,
That wheeled before her vision like a dream.

She knew an awful woe hung o'er the house;
She thought the sun cloud-hidden when he shone;
She thought that all the birds and flowers were dead;
She did not know her father's confined face;
Kept moaning, "Where is brother Edward gone?"
Sometimes she sat with knitted brow for hours,
And tried from out the chaos of her mind
To regulate the tangled misty past.

The farm to strangers went, the lonely house
Was left untenanted, no one would live
Where horror-scenes still seemed to haunt the place.
Edie was sent to distant friends away
For school-life, new companionship, and care.

I told you there was one called in, upon
That awful day by Edie's frantic screams:

Paul Evans, still a stranger to the town,
 His years had reached the middle arch of life.
 Being unmarried, he was still called young,—
 “The young new doctor,” by the villagers.
 Now should I tell you that his eyes were brown,
 His hair the same, all hung in clustering curls
 And careless waves around a noble brow;
 If I should tell you that the hue of health
 Burned on his cheek and brightened in his eye,
 That eloquence of life was in his step,
 His genial smile, his joyous rich-toned voice,
 You’d think you could portray him;—you could not.
 It seems to me when Nature made him up,
 She so mixed carnal with the spiritual,
 She blended so the passionate and pure,
 He often was a wonder to himself;
 Much more was he a wonder to his friends;

So generous as to scarcely think of self,
Yet so self-willed as sometimes to be mean,
In his profession witnessing the doom
Of thousands, victims of the madning bowl,
While gazing on their ruins day by day,
Against his better moral sense revolt,
Along the dread abyss day after day
He willed to tread the dangerous, dizzy verge,
And why? Because he willed it, that was all,
Meek, unpretending as a little child,
Woe be to him who jostled 'gainst his pride,
Soul-imaged in the eastern monarch's dream,
Whose feet were formed of iron and of clay,
Weakness and strength, part iron and part clay,

So *man-like* in his stubborn pride of heart,
Such man-like tyranny of mind and will;

The spirit that would stoop and pluck a rose
Or little way-side daisy just for this,
To scatter leaf by leaf along the way;
That idly, uselessly would win a heart
To cast away all interest when won;
The spirit that for pride would crush a life,
Nay, trample his own soul-life in the dust;
The spirit that for self-will would destroy
Another's heaven-hope, nay, would blight his own.

How many barks, love-freighted, had been wrecked
Amid the breakers of that iron coast,
How many joy-hopes, blossom-wreathed, went down
In treacherous sand beneath that smiling sea,
I cannot tell you. This I know, his heart
Grew strangely interested in the girl,
The poor bewildered maiden in her grief.

With all the skill that he was master of
He strove to wake her reason's lost control.
Within her pastor's house, the parsonage,
Kept by his widowed sister and her child,
Found Esther refuge and the kindest care.
But when her guardian, seeking to restore,
Told of the Savior's sorrow and His love,
She, looking up with wintry, wondering smile,
Would say, "I did know Jesus once, the Lord.
Alas! He died so many years ago.
Is that not why the May-days never come?
They killed Him, and the May-days never come."

Each Sabbath twilight Esther loved to sit
Upon the steps of her deserted home,
And strive to clear the memory-fogs that closed
So curtain-like around the tragic past.

When garden walk was full of autumn leaves,
Or bordered with young grass and springing flowers,
Or ice-gems sparkled over bush and shrub,
To her old birth-place, to the place of doom,
She ever wound her solitary way.
And there she lingered till the sun went down,
When pitying friends would come and lead her
home.

Twelve times the new-moon, like a silver bow,
Stood out among the stars at twilight hush.
Twelve times she flooded earth with mystic light
And banished darkness from his ebony throne.
The summer roses faded, and the corn,
Silk-tasseled, golden-eared, was gathered in;
Fruit-laden trees spake cheerily to man,
"Come take this burden from our loving arms."

The hazel, and the hickory, and the beech,
Shook from their boughs the blessings of the year;
The bird-chief to his tribes gave forth command,
"Fair orange groves await us in the south."
Then dying glory shone upon the trees,
Then dried leaves rustled over withered grass,
Then came the first snow down and wove a shroud,
For long, long months the snow-shroud covered all.

At last the nights grew shorter, and the days
Their sunshine lengthened; strange, mysterious throbs
Of life, new-wakened, through earth's pulses ran.
All interlacing roots beneath the sod,
All buried seeds and grasses felt the thrill,
All hidden bulbs responded to the call.
There was a stir of crowding, pushing life:
There was a cry, "O, south wind, come and blow."

Each moment every hour was bringing forth
Unnumbered myriads, of life so full.
And so because up piercing through the soil
Ten thousand, thousand, grass-blades cut their way,
Because all nature moved, and buzzed, and sung,
And mother birds sat brooding o'er their young,
Man's heart-harp leaped into the choir of praise,
And sang, "Blessed be the Father, it is spring."

Again 'twas blossom-season, happy May,
Resplendent as that day of death and doom;
You might have thought that not an hour had passed.
Again 'twas nearing sunset. Esther sat,
As wont, beneath that memory-haunted porch,
Soft southern breezes fanned her brow and kissed
Her pallid lips, as if in tenderness.
Her new friend sat beside her, sat and held

The dear old Bible open at the place
Where mother's hand traced sacred pledge and vow.
Though many leaves were seamed and torn away,
All of the dear, familiar names were there;
And one there was in bold and boy-like hand,
As if he meant to glorify that name,
By long, long years of valor—EDWARD GRAY.

He thought perhaps that this same scene and hour,
When all around recalled the mournful past,
He might take up again the missing links
Of memory in her disordered brain:
And so he sat and told the story o'er,
With plaintive voice repeating name for name.
He clasped her cold hands, bent his iron will
With all its energy of hope and life,
And all its magnetism to the task.

So he was victor. Low she bowed her head.
Great tears, like rain-shower, washed adown her
 cheeks;

Her whole frame shook and trembled with the **rush**
Of old home-memories and old love-dreams.

I said at midnight hour the waking fear,
That wierd, mysterious sense of loneliness.
Is sometimes charmed away by just the beat.
The even beat, of tranquil human heart.
And thus it was with Esther. She had learned
To wait and watch the coming of his step;
To smile when he smiled down into her heart.
So now, awaking, as she stood and gazed
With quailing eye upon that dreadful gulf,
By which her feet unconsciously had passed,
As froze her life-blood and grew dim her eye,

She felt a strong and yet a human arm
Uphold her. Grant heaven she may not lean
Upon that thorny staff, an arm of flesh!

LIGHT.

I stood at midnight, stood and cried for light.
The thick, felt darkness shrouded like a pall;
The north wind, rushing down from frozen fields,
Beat on my brow, and beat against my breast.
I heard behind me, sobbing in the gale,
The pine trees on the hill-side in the gale.
I heard beside me rushing to the sea
The mountain torrent, rushing to the sea;
Long dusky wings of night-birds circling wheeled

To distant cyrie o'er rock-girdled wave.
Then heard I echoing voices from the waste,
And mocking, echoing voices overhead.

I stood amid the blackness, stood and cried,
Earth said "Let there be light." The fire-fiend
then

Enkindled with his torch a ship at sea,
Burnished the midnight billows with its glow,
Which died away as death shrieks rose on air.
Then from a distant city did arise
A conflagration vast, for leagues around
Shone lurid glare from ruined home and hearth.
This, too, died out—'t was darker than before.

I stood amid the blackness, stood and cried,
Air said "Be light." so ignus fatuus

Danced o'er the marsh-land; star-like meteors played

Among the mists along the river-bank.

Afar, on north horizon beautiful,

The borealis traced a phantom-day,

Pale, shadowy phantom of oncoming day.

I stood amid the blackness, stood and cried.

Distant etherial worlds said, "Be there light."

Then long rays wandered down from stellar orbs,

So long, so far, that sun-paved milky-way,

That south Orion, and the polar star,

Upon us faintly gleamed mere points of light.

Then Earth's fair sister planet cast a flood

Of wan, cold radiance, like funereal shroud.

Then naked cliff and wild unresting wave,

Then mountain torrent, and old woods beyond,

Gleamed spectre-like.

But, ah! the cold. My heart
Still pleaded for the light, the light of day.
Till longing eyes east eastward did behold
A rose-cloud resting on a mountain peak,
Gold-lined and gilt-edged, in the Orient.
Then glory-darts along the east upsprang,
And flooded all the firmament with light.
Pale waxed the stars, ashamed the white-faced moon,
That wandered dreamily adown the west.
Then mountain torrent did seem all aglow,
Though dark old fir-tops fell, the dazzling flood
Like burning bush aflame yet unconsumed.
Uprisen from the low-lands deadly damps
And noxious night vapors did flee away.
The storm-cloud had passed over with the night,
Freed nature, jubilant, arose and smiled.

O, child of shadow! Standing on the shore
Of time, and shud'ring at the black waves sweep,
Sure as thy cry goes up for light, 't will come.
Be not thou satisfied with lesser gleams
Until the day-star doth arise on thee,
The day-dawn of the Sun of Righteousness.

O, child of sorrow! All around thy path
Are hidden joys thou canst not comprehend;
The beautiful that wait revealing light;
Soul-rapture rising from the grave of shade;
Love-mystery thou may'st not understand
Until the day-star rise, and day shall dawn.

O, child of night! Re-echoing with thy moan
The weird unresting wail-song of the sea,
The beat of Arctic rain upon thy breast,

The rayless midnight black upon thy brow,
Send out across the waste thy cry for light;
Turn to the Orient and cry for light.

Unreal that which lights thy soul this day
As Borealis of the northern sky;
Misleading as the marshland's meteor glare;
Alas! as empty of all true content,
As winter moon-beams silvery, silent, cold;
More torturing than the flame-wrapped ship at sea,
The doomed, defenceless, drifting ship at sea.

An awful thing it is to merge our own
Identity of soul-life in the love
Of one whose inner thought we may not know.
An awful thing at other's will to grieve,
Aye, sometimes at another's word to die;

For love hath often such intensity,
That life or death upon its verdict hangs.
An awful thing it is, when in a crowd
Of human beings we see only one,
So isolated from all other mind,
One voice alone hath power to reach the heart;
In hushed, abstracted silence, cold hands clasped.
And lips are sealed in dumb, magnetic spell.
Unreasoning, unresisting, we are lost.
O, well for thee, if he who folds that spell
About thee, hath God's image in his soul;
And well for thee if he dream not his power.
So be thou hast not strength to cast aside,
Conceal, O, captive one, conceal thy chain,
And never cease to struggle and to pray,
Until in Christ, the Holy, thou art free.

It is an awful error to invest
Earth-idols with unreal excellence,
For we in anguish shall awake at last
To find their gilded garments but a dream;
To find our heroes poor, sin-loving men;
Our promised Eden full of weeds and woe;
Our love-dream only a sorceric spell;
Our staff a hissing serpent in the hand.
O, Christ, thy brotherhood our wound hath probed;
Thy counsel this: "Reserve the love of loves
For the Unchangeable; pure for the Pure."

Back from the land of shadows came the maid,
From old enchantments which do chain the mind.
Confuse the vision and undo the soul.
So life's realities once more did cast
Their weight upon her, as among the sheaves

She gleaned beneath the sun its ripened grain,
Along its hedge-rows plucked the primrose fair,
The way-side daisy and the purpling grape.

Adopted into hearts that loved her more
Because her lot was lonely, open way
She found for usefulness and honest toil.
A teacher of the little village school,
Her welcome home was round among them all.
Time wooed back health's carnation to her cheek.
Time added lustre to the pensive eye.
Life's current peacefully flowed on awhile
Through meadow-lands of vivid velvet green,
And quiet dells. Her friend began to speak
Of bridal vows. He was in earnest now.
There are some natures in the crowd of mind
Whose life intense awaken earnestness

In every heart that beats beside their own,
That give their imprint well defined and clear
To all around, receiving no return.
With such none trifle; all are friends or foes.
Alas! alas! that close companionship
Which deepened his regard for her, began
To strip her idol's gilded armament,
And show to her unwilling eyes the clay,
The base clay and the iron mixed with clay.
She drove at first th' accusing thought away,
Out-crying, "Baseness and ingratitude!"
Not at her bidding. Oftentimes a sneer
Of holy things, a chance-dropped careless word
Of easy conquests over simple hearts,
A disregard of pain to others given,
Would seat the unbribed conscience on its throne.
Happy, secure, that life when love goes down,

If constant reason steady at the helm
Of home-bound barque, guide firmly into port.

One eve, through slanting sunbeams, from her school,
With brain-toil wearied, that hot summer day,
Returning home, she passed that place accursed,
Ne'er passed without a shudder and a sigh.
The shop had been refitted, beautified,
All its old roughness garnished, covered up,
Or hid away in darkness. There was naught
Except the trade itself that might disgust
The most refined. Some fascination strange,
Some premonition of a changing fate,
Some warning finger from the dim unseen,
Arrested her, and as she turned she gazed
Dumb, anguish-rooted, and as pale as death.
The man with whom her destiny was linked,

On whom her heart-hopes hung for happiness,
With crowd profane, stood drinking at the bar.
He, as he quaffed the fire-drink, turned and met
Her look of frozen, measureless despair.
The spell was broken, for a burning flush
Of proud resentment rose upon his brow.
Then turned she sadly, slowly down the street,
Slowly and sadly, just a little way.
He came and drew her cold hand through his arm.
She sickened as his brandy tainted breath
She felt upon her face. She spoke no word.
They walked in silence on, and on, and on;
Out through the village, past the fields of grain,
Down to the rock beside that dear old spring,
The willow bordered rock beside the spring.
Then in the waning twilight sat them down.
At last Paul spoke:

“Esther, what does this mean?

How is it you have set yourself to watch
My actions?”

She but replied in mournful tones,
As life was breaking up and hope had fled:
“Then all is over, my joy-dream is passed
So soon!”

“So soon,” he answered angrily:
“What do you mean? ’Tis weak, ’tis womanish;
Because your relatives had not the sense
To take in moderation God’s good gifts,
Must I refrain from using as I please
My manhood’s liberty?”

She answered not.
She heeded not the insult. Far too sad
Her life had grown; she hardly heard the words;
Rather they strengthened her in her resolve.

Sometimes, when life blood rushes to the head
Or heart, the pain of friction doth bring back
The system's balance. 'Tis a kindness shown
The dozing, dying sleeper in the snow
To bruise and hurt, by any means to stir
And keep astir.

A moment's silent thought;
She stood before him and she lifted up
Her right hand toward the heavens, and promised
God
Never to wed with one upon whose lips
Was the pollution of that sin accursed.
Then lifting both her hands, she vowed a vow
That all the energies of all her life
And life's influence, should be brought to bear
Against the woe that made her fatherless.

All trace of anger faded from his brow,
White grew his lips as her's had been before:—
He knew the girl would keep her word or die,
Unless he changed, and that his darling pride
Forbade; and now, not hand in hand, apart,
Toward home they walked, life-weary and apart;
Just as their hearts henceforward must diverge,
Each burdened and unaided to the end.

That night at evening altar Esther said,
Before the pastor standing, “Pray for me;
O, ask the Lord to kindle in my soul
His spirit-life and its self-sacrifice.
Henceforward do I live for Him alone.
No reservation make I, no earth-love
In this poor heart shall sit upon His throne.”
Through all the lonely hours of that sad night

By her moon-lighted window wrestled she;
But when the dawn bent down and kissed the hills,
She slept in peace, a tear on either cheek.
O, Esther, from henceforth must thy work be
The crucifying of a misplaced love.

With him not so. To drown his pain he turned
To sensual delights. Upon his pride
He leaned; a strong, but, O, a thorny staff.
As there had been no God in all his thought,
His grief the savor bore of "Death to death."
Unloos'ning her pure hand he swiftly sank
Down to the level of his own dark soul.
She knew he suffered much. The stern-set brow,
The wearied, absent look he often wore,
Brought deeper pain than her own loneliness.
They often met, for at the parsonage

His visits were as frequent as before.

With common words of greeting, never once

Their hands did clasp, or his eyes read her own.

Between their souls rose barriers heaven high.

Awhile before he had a cottage bought,

Bird-nest like, sheltered by great evergreens,

And wreathed with ivy vines. So they had called

It Ivy-home. "Here will," they said, "be found

Such happiness as they who love may know."

Of late she had not passed it. She had grown

Too sorrowful to see it in the glare

Of summer sunshine. So she came one eve,

One fair moonlighted evening, to the place;

Came and stood leaning on the garden gate.

Some one had planted just before the porch

A weeping willow, graceful, beautiful.

Down in its shadow was a cypress bed.
That night it looked so strangely like a grave.
Before her fell a shadow on the lawn;
Some one she felt was standing by her side.
She dropped her head, and bitter, blinding tears
Fell silently.

Wild was her prayer for strength.
Paul laid his hand beneath her tear-wet cheek,
And lifted up her face toward the light;
Studied its care-worn lineaments a space,
Smiling half tenderly, half bitterly.

“I see you too have suffered. It is well.

Do not I suffer too? O, Esther! come
And make this place a paradise to me.”

She only said: “Have you decided, Paul?

Our paths diverge; leave yours and come with me.

I dare not wed my life to moral death;

I will not tread the downward path with you,
Even with *you* !”

He started from her side.

A burning anger-flush rose to his brow,
With fingers clenched in pride and agony,
With muttered malediction, strode away.

About these days Edie from school returned.
Not fresher, sweeter, was the garden rose;
Not blither was the humming-bird that dipped
Into the secret heart of bud and flower.
Came like a star-gleam into all their lives,
Came like a queen, seating herself upon,
As if by right, the throne of every heart.

LABOR.

WHAT can a woman do in earth's reform,
What can an earnest hearted woman do?
May she, engirt with armor, sally forth,
Crusading in knight-errantry 'gainst wrong?
Can she amid this Babel clamor make
Her voice be heard? Hath it the clarion ring?
Within herself finds she the force to cope
With evil in its hardest, vilest form?
Nay, is it every man that hath the force?
One in an age be earth's reformers born.
Some things there be a woman can do well,
So that her voice is low, clear-toned and sweet,
This be to her advantage, and the world's.

She mouldeth public sentiment; she gives
Tone to its morals; she doth train the young;
And if she can do more, God holdeth her
Responsible. There have been Deborahs,
And Judiths, and Joan D'Arcs.
A prophet or a prophetess may call
The race to its allegiance. Let earth hear.

Ages ago a meek faced woman came,
Bowed with the weight of love and gratitude,
Came, bearing precious ointment for His feet.
She wiped them with her wealth of unbound hair.
A traitor murmured: "Wherefore was this waste?"
The Master said, O, blessed be His name,
"Why trouble her; she hath done what she could."

To Judah's temple-court the Master came.

He saw the rich of their abundance cast
Into the treasury of the Lord, their God.
A woman, clad in weeds of widowhood,
Came timidly and cast in her two mites.
'Twas all her living. Hear the Son of man:
"I tell you she hath given more than all."

A seed, so frail, so small a thing it seemed,
Unworthy of a thought, 't was brushed aside.
The spring-breeze clasped it in his hand and bore
And buried it beneath the mois'ened mould,
One long, warm ray of sunshine lit upon
The seed-grave, and this life-thrill quickened it,
As surely as the angel's trumpet shall
Call to us in the dust of earth, "Arise!"
Forced upward by its longings for the light,
Through soil and sod it upward cut its way;

Two tiny leaves, and then it grew and grew,
Till birds might lodge them in the branch thereof.

Long had the florist watched his favorite,
All other plants were in their glory. This
Showed only now a great unfolded bud.
Infolded and in darkness, petals formed
And perfected. When to his practised eye
Came signs of birth and bloom, he called his friends
At twilight 'gan its snow-leaves to expand;
When from the zenith shone the moon, full-orbed,
Full-orbed in beauty, wonderful in bloom,
This night-queen of the garden met our sight.
O, Perfector of all infolded good,
O, Author of our providence and prayers.
Thine is the mystery of birth and bloom.

I said a maiden, with uplifted hands,
Did consecrate her influence and life
Against the curse that wrote her fatherless.
In lone Pennels questioned she her soul
Its strength to suffer, and its will to do.
Much questioned she of God, and in the deep
Of her own inner being struggled long
For freedom; one by one undid the links
That bound her, like the fetters of a slave,
To old time usages of men and things.
Till, lifted into glorious liberty,
She found her citizenship in the Christ,
Where there is neither male nor female,
Learned or barbarian, bond or free,
But all are one in Christ.

And this her work:

A faithful warning to the tempted one;

Wise whisper in the ear of maiden, when
 Her viney love around some Upas clung;
 Brave, earnest words to men of honest minds;
 Deep questions of the right and wrong of things;
 The ballot's fearful power for good and ill;
 The law-maker's responsibility;
 Was man to be his brother's keeper here?
 Till grave and candid men began to ask,
 "What is *my* work, what can *I* do to stay
 The flood tide of this evil in our midst?"
 Who strangely thought the thought original
 In their own heart.

And this was Esther's work:

A pledge among the children of her school.
 Here wisdom's fountain to up-reaching mind
 She filled and flooded it with glorious truth.
 On this good ground the seed sprung up, bore fruit.

And early ripened into usefulness.

Home came the children, and did preach the word;

They frowned with such dis'proving eyes upon

The proffered wine-cup, that to parents' brow

Uprose a flush of shame.

Then came new grief:

Another cup was pressed upon her lips.

Strange confidence arose between the two

She loved the most, and feared for most on earth.

Her heart, grown wise, well understood the flush

That deepened into rose on Edie's cheek,

The dove-look that crept into Edie's eyes

And nestled there at mention of his name;

Well understood her tremor at his step.

She, as by instinct, felt the links unseen

He wound about the half unconscious child.

'T was no mean jealousy. Her sister heart

Would freely give its best of earthly hope
To ward that darling from a life of pain.
But, O! to see her happy Edie stand
Spell-bound beside that blossom-hidden pit
Whence she in terror had retraced her steps
In fear and awful tremb'lings of her soul.
What could she do? Could she in Edie's ears
Report his failings? Would that trusting child
Believe her words? Would she with Esther's eyes
Look on his sin? What could she do to save?
Might she to Evans go and beg him to spare
Her innocent young sister from himself?
Could she be sure that he would understand
Her motive, she might summon strength to go.
Her woman's pride forewarned, this must not be.
What refuge had poor Esther left but prayer,
That refuge for the spirit desolate?

What matters it whose be the hand that turns
The child's kaleidoscope, so that new forms
Of symmetry and beauty meet the eye?
Nor matters it what seed-thought turns the drift
Of public sentiment, so that it drift
Aright. He raiseth whom He will into
Co-partnership in labor with Himself.
From babes and sucklings He perfecteth praise.
Not always to the swift gives He the race,
Not always gives the battle to the strong.
Man in his wisdom may not search Him out.
This be the word of God.

And thus it was.

May be the temperance evangelist
Who in his round came preaching 'gainst the sin;
May be the reeling drunkards of the street
More frequent grew; that all attendant ills

Of crime and pauperism pressed upon
The worldly policy of some. 'Tis true
That this once quiet, peaceful country town
Had multiplied those dens of infamy, until
The tide of death turned downward fearfully.

A closely gathered crowd in court-house old,
Of eager interested listeners,
Mothers and men, gray-haired and sunny-haired,
Held by the speaker spell-bound for an hour,
As with word-pictures he portrayed the sin,
The wretchedness and hopeless misery
Caused by this unchained demon in their midst.
Poor Edie, sobbing, felt the dreary past
Burdened with horrors, crowding back again,
But over Esther's face a holy glow
Shone as an inner light reflected through.

She was not living in the past at all,
But in the present, full of promised good,
And in the future, full of life's reward.

The speaker ceased. Then other words were said,
And other names were called; among the rest,
The name of Dr. Evans. He arose
With smile upon his lips, half smile, half sneer.
He laid no claim to eloquence; he thought
He had his share of homely common sense;
Held views upon this subject different;
Nor did he think it well to work upon
Their sentimental sympathies, much more
The sisters and the tender-hearted ones.
Liquors distilled he claimed to be a blessing meant
To be enjoyed, not thrown away because
Some give to beastly appetite full sway.

As well might food be thrown away, because
There had been who had gormandized to death.
The best physicians knew, and knew right well,
Used as a medicine, that alcohol
Was to be prized, and then he quoted from
The Book of God: "Wine for the stomach's sake,"
And glancing 'round defiantly, sat down.

When Evans rose to speak, a painful flush
Awoke on Esther's cheek and on her brow.
As he jeered on, it faded out and left
A deathlike pallor where the rose had been.
When he sat down, she 'rose, and from white lips
Poured forth a wail of eloquence which made
The shame-flush burn blood-red upon his brow.
The strangeness of the scene; the prejudice
That bore against her womanhood; the scorn

Waiting to fall upon her; the foul sneer
Of those who would have woman but to be
The petted plaything of a man's caprice;
Were all forgotten, and the pent up wrong.
Her whole heart-history, o'erflowed its bounds.
She laid her child-home open to their gaze,
All her wrecked hopes, bewildered intellect;
Her ruined father and his murdered boy:
Her mother, resting only in the grave.
Some bitter, scathing words of stern rebuke
She hurled upon the man who dared to stand
With false quotations from the word of God
In sin's defence.

The silence was intense.

She, in the hush that followed, unperceived,
Did through a side door quietly step out.

There was a strange, death-feeling at her heart.
A throbbing beat, a drowning, struggling breath.
The coolness of the evening on her brow
Somewhat revived her, and she started home.
Not half way had she gone, she heard a step.
She turned, and he she had rebuked that night
Stood by her side. He whispered, and his voice
Was hoarse with passion: "Esther, you will cure
My strangely foolish preference for you.
How would I please you for a brother? for
I think your rose-bud Edie much more fair,
More wise and maidenly. I fancy she
Would not refuse me for a foolish whim."

Upturned to his a face so ghastly white
Did through the shadows gleam, his anger fled;
And in a voice above a whisper scarce:



“O, Paul! have I not suffered yet enough?
Will not you spare my sister from your hate.
Or what is still more deadly, from your love?
O, spare your soul from adding sin to sin.
If you *will* go to ruin, go alone.”
With numbed hands groping as to find support,
With life-blood oozing from her lips, she fell
Upon her face.

In dim unconsciousness that followed this
She felt him bending o’er her, heard him say:
“O, darling! have I killed you?” felt his tears,
And felt upon her brow his farewell kiss.
Then all was blank.

How long she could not tell.
For days and weeks her soul did dwell
Upon the border-land of death. So loosed from earth,

The frail, soft touch of one detaining hand,
One sister hand, seemed everything that held
Her life-boat at its moorings on the strand.
So loosed from earth that everything below
Looked thin, and vapory, and indistinct;
And old fond faces bending over her
She gazed on half reproachfully, as if
They shut her out from her inheritance.
She looked upon her thin, cold hands, and said:
“Soon shalt thou moulder into nothingness
In the encoffined stillness of the tomb;”
Upon the tresses of her unbound hair,
That in their silken beauty fell across
Her neck, her snowy pillow and her arms,
And thought: “Once braided, thou shalt ne’er
unbraided,
In deep, encoffined stillness of the tomb.”

When Esther took again the thread of life
And went about its duties, one heart-strand,
One link, was wanting. O'er and o'er in dreams,
She felt those burning tears upon her brow:
She heard that bitter cry: "O, darling! have
I killed you?"—felt his grieving, farewell kiss,
And that was all—she saw him but in dreams,
She never asked his whereabouts, but once
She heard her guardian say he had gone west,
Beyond the Rocky mountains, far, far west.

Unmentioned was his name, but Edie's eyes
Oft glistened in the light of tears unshed,
Her voice took on the mournful tone of one
Who knows the pain of disappointed love,
But time, I told you, gentle Edie's cure,
Soon gave her back her old heart joyousness:

A merry-hearted wife and mother now,
Her bird-like music through the old house rings,
Though spinning wheel be silent in the loft.

But Esther her life-work had just begun.
Her pleading voice that evening turned the tide,
Which at its full but needed a chance force
To give impetus forward to the right.
From far and near, about the land, there came
Calls for the heroine of temperance.
Calm, clear, and certain-toned, her voice rang out,
Earnest and eloquent her warning words.
Within that widening influence thousands felt
The thrill of healing waters in their souls.

Ten years passed by. So pure, so peacefully
Flowed on the current of her life that she

Seemed scarcely older than she was before.
Though here and there a silver thread appeared
Among the glistening gold-links of her hair,
Her brow unruffled still, her grave sweet smile,
Full of love's magic; so thought girls and boys
Who crowded 'round Aunt Esther, and so thought
A host of friends.

A host of earnest friends;
Among them one whom she had known for years:
And they of late had been co-laborers
Amid the promise of the harvest-field.
She stood beside him when in early grief
He laid his bride beneath the summer sod
And turned away in loneliness of soul.
So when he asked if she would go with him
To his far Indian mission in the west,
She knew he offered but a second love,

A life-long friendship founded on respect.
She felt that this was all she had to give.
And as he asked no other love, she went.

And if, in dream-lands fair, another brow
Bent over her, and if another voice
Rang in her ears, he did not deem she wronged;
And when old memories of the mournful past
Brought tears for his dead love upon his cheek,
She did not name it robbery or loss.

The remnant of a powerful Indian tribe
Beside their mission house encamped one day,
One Sabbath day, to learn the white man's God.
An old Chief of the tribe arose and said:
"A pale-face from afar beyond the range
Of snowy mountain summits dwelt with them.

Because he loved them much he cautioned them
Beware the white man's burning drink. That when
To spirit-land he passed, a sacred book
Was left among them." Then the gray old Chief
Drew from his blanket's fold a Testament,
And in it was a name,—What of a name?
O, nothing; only it did rend the veil
Of Esther's past. It sent the life-blood back
Curd'ling around her heart a moment's space.
Within the Testament, a Bible-leaf,
A torn, and crushed, and mangled Bible-leaf.
Upon its margin written, "ESTHER GRAY;
Wronged, tortured, lost, but, O, so dearly loved."
And that was all.

OTHER POEMS.

THE WINNEBAGO HUNTER.

WHEN that rosy morning twilight
 Paled and shut the stars from view;
When the early birds were singing
 O'er a world baptized in dew;
When the warm, new-risen glory,
 Bathing tree-top in its glow,
Bade the waning moon dip westward,
 It had dimmed and faded so;—
Spirit-like, the swift-winged breezes,
 Through groves half in shadow yet,
Laden came, with wild balm fragrance,—
 Fragrance of the violet,

Forest bough and meadow blossom,
River, rock, and June-clothed earth,
With the new-born day, yet dallied
In the cradle of its birth.

Forty years ago, this west-land,
In that golden sunrise glow,
Where the wild beast prowled and wandered,
Where the red man bent his bow,
Stood in all its virgin freshness,
And the green banks up and down,
Of the winding Sinissippi,
Showed no hamlet, farm, or town.
Then the marsh-grass and the rushes
Stood untrodden on its brink;
Then the oak-grove cast its shadow
Where the wild-bird came to drink.

Then, as now, its clear reflection
Mirrored cliff-line bold and high.
Whence the native wild-eyed eagle
Spread his strong wings for the sky.

Forty years ago, a hunter
Came and launched his rude canoe.
'Mid this silent, lonely landscape
I have tried to paint for you.
Not the rude unkempt backwoodsman.
Sinking down to savage life.
In its untrained license glorying—
Glorying in its scenes of strife.
He by heart knew all the maxims
Of the unblest bustling world;
Once sat in its halls of learning.
Saw its commerce-sails unfurled;

Once believed its words of friendship,

All to trusting hearts they seem;

Listened to its faithless love-vows,

Till they vanished like a dream.

Vanished like a dream,—alone now.

On that golden summer day,

In the might of earnest manhood;

Threaded through his locks with gray,

Mingled lines of pride and passion

Marred his lip's unconscious curl:

Yet his smile had something in it

Sad, and gentle as a girl.

Stood he thus, enwrapped in silence,

Saw not river, rock, or bough—

Gazed and saw not—bitter thought-tides

Flooding lip, and cheek, and brow,

For a moment; then he muttered—

Muttered with a smothered sigh:

“You and I, old world, have parted—

I shall not be missed. Good-bye.”

Like an archer’s well-shot arrow,

Sped he northward, up the stream;

Swiftly, like a thought-barbed arrow—

Silently, like sleep-winged dream,

As in panoramic vision,

Tree and meadow-lands swept by.

Memory-haunted, memory-burdened;

Murmured he with smothered sigh:

“You and I, old world, have parted—

I shall not be missed. Good-bye.”

All day long against the current

Sped he up that forest stream,

Past the bluffs and past the prairies,
Past the openings in the green.
Once he heard a hunter's rifle,
Heard the footsteps of a deer;
Once he passed the rude log shanty
Of a hardy pioneer.
Passed a hundred tiny islands,
With their glistening pebbles stored;
Passed the mouth of wild Kishwaukee—
Passed the Indians' Rocky Ford.
Ever, ever like an echo,
Came the boatman's low refrain,
Keeping time to steady oar-stroke
With its monotone of pain.
Half in thought and half in whisper,
Midway 'twixt a smile and sigh:
"You and I, old world, have parted—
I shall not be missed. Good-by."

Thus the day sank slowly westward,
And the length'ning shadows grew
Till but few faint rays of brightness
Dropped like gold the tree-tops through.
Down behind broad field untrodden;
Down behind great bluffs and hills;
Down behind vast, trackless woodlands—
And the earth grew dark and still,
Save the wailing of the night-bird,
Save the plaintive whip-poor-will.

Came he, when the last of twilight
Lingered on the river yet,
Where the lonely Pick-tonica
Passed her marsh-lands low and wet.
On the further side a bluff rose,
Woody-crowned, against the sky.

Where the wolf howled, and the panther

From the thicket sent his cry.

There, beside his watch-fire, waited

Till another day drew nigh.

Then he built his lodge, and hunted

All the summer months away;

There for days along the river

With his rifle he would stray—

Plucked the shining wild strawberries.

Dried them for his winter cheer;

Caught the fishes of the river,

Dried the venison of the deer;

Made his bed of grass and rushes,

Drank at Nature's fountain clear.

Many a Sabbath he would lay him

Where the bluffs o'erhung the stream;

Lay to watch the clouds above him.

Watch the waters pass, and dream

Of another home and country.

Of another summer sky,

Till, with white lips, he would murmur—

Murmur with a smothered sigh:

“You and I, old world, have parted—

I shall not be missed. Good-bye.”

Many a time, a glorious vision

Fixed upon his waking dream:

Saw the future farm and hamlet,

Saw the future forge-fires gleam;

Heard the church-bell answer church-bell

Up and down and o’er the stream;

Saw a thousand strong-armed workmen.

Heard the factory’s din and roar;

Saw a thousand glad-eyed children
Trooping from the school-room door;
Heard the railroad engine screaming
All those broad prairies o'er.

Once the red men—Winnebagoes—
Warm and weary from the chase,
Peered into his lodge, and wondered
At the stranger—the pale face;
Asked for food, and for tobacco.
Slept within his lodge till day;
Gathered up their bows and arrows,
Rose and went upon their way.

Once a missionary halted—
Halted at the hunter's door,
Craving food, and rest, and shelter—

Shelter till the storm was o'er;
Questioned of his soul, prayed with him,
Placed God's word within his hand;
Shared his frugal fare and blessed him,
Went upon his way again.

Then the clusters of the wild grape
Had to purple richness come,
And the forest fruits were ripened—
The crab-apple and the plum.
Then came early frosts of autumn,
And the nights grew chill and long,
When the summer blooms were faded,
When the summer birds were gone;
Then the woods took on the grandeur
Of the richest sunset glow—
Purple, crimson, yellow—waving

In the autumn breezes slow.
Then the hazy Indian summer
Came, enchanting shore and stream
With its magic wand of beauty,
Still and shadowy as a dream.

But a change came o'er his spirit,
And his step grew sad and slow;
He no more within the forest
With his dog and gun could go.
All day long around his doorway,
Loitered in the warm sunshine;
All night long upon his deerskins
Waking, wearily reclined;
For a pestilent miasma,
Risen from the marsh-lands, came
And subdued the stalwart hunter,

Spreading poison through his frame,
Sometimes trembling, chill and cheerless,
In his cabin all alone;
Sometimes in his fevered frenzy,
Raving of a distant home.

When the storms of bleak December
Filled the forests with their roar;
When the gaunt, ill-omened wolf howled
Hunger-driven, round his door;
Crouched above his dying embers,
Sallow cheek and hollow eye,
Sat he weeping, courage vanished,
Half believing he would die.

One night when his dog uneasy
Grew, with many a whine and bark,

As he peered from crack and casement,

Vainly out into *the dark*;

Heard he only stealthy footsteps

On the wet sward by the door;

Heard a timid knock, then entered

One he ne'er had met before.

*Ap-uk-wa, an Indian maiden,

Stood with stately step and form,

But her black hair and her blanket

Drenched and dripping with the storm.

She had come—the old Chief's daughter,

Youngest, and his best beloved,

Skilled in all the arts of healing—

Sent his gratitude to prove

For the pale-faced stranger fed him

* Bulrush.

Once, and sheltered from the rain;
So the Winnebago's daughter
Came to bring him health again.
In her hands were barks and berries,
Roots fresh gathered from the soil.
Weary sank she on the hearthstone
With her travel and her toil.

Ap-uk-wa, the old Chief's daughter,
Kindled up his fire so high—
Made his lonely hut so cheerful,
He forgot the stormy sky;
Stirred his couch of grass and rushes,
Bade the sick man there lie down,
Piled the deerskins all above him,
Tucked them closely all around.
Then she came and stood beside him,

Bringing him—in his tin cup—
Medicine so dark and bitter,
Saying, “White man, drink it up.”
Laid the firewood high and higher,
Made his herb-tea still more strong;
Wrapped his deerskins closer round him,
Sang her low, strange Indian song.
When he asked for roasted venison,
Called for coffee or corn bread,
Smiling stood she there beside him,
Gave him Waho-tea instead.

Three long hours the worn out sleeper,
Swelt’ring, dozing, dreaming lay,
And his watcher watched beside him
Till the dawning of the day.
When he woke the sun was shining

Bright and warm across the floor,
Without pain of limb, or fever;

But he saw his nurse no more.
She had left a meal beside him—

Roasted venison and corn bread;
She had emptied out the Waho,
Left him coffee there instead.

Though for days and months the hunter
Had not felt so well and new;
Though he found, when she had left him,
Chills and fever left him, too—

Strangely, nothing seemed to suit him,
Like a child his peevish brow;
Never seemed his lodge to be so
Comfortless as it was now.

When the snow-drifts filled the forests,

He could wander far and near;

Trap the beaver, trap the otter,

Hunt the wolf and chase the deer.

But he saw no Indian maiden,

Though his heart made search for her,

And his lodge grew very lonely,

Though it had grown rich in fur.

One day seated, idly musing,

Sullenly above the fire,

As the wind swept round the hillside,

Piled he up the fagots higher;

Heard once more that stealthy footfall,

Heard his name called low and sweet;

Ap-uk-wa, the old Chief's daughter,

Came and sat down at his feet;

Told him that some thieving warriors

In her father's tribe, one day,

Planned to kill the lonely hunter,

Planned to steal his furs away.

Bent he down and smiled upon her,

Looked his thanks, and murmured too:

“Better far than wealth or culture

Is a warm heart, firm and true.”

Said: “My lodge is very lonesome—

Lone and dark as it can be—

Be my bride, O, Indian maiden,

Be my wife, and bide with me.”

Never blushing, never shrinking,

In her own hand she drew,

Bending down her brow upon it,

Saying: “I could die for you.”

Then the man of God, returning
From his mission-field one day,
In the bonds of marriage bound them,
Blessed, and went upon his way.

Days of peaceful summer sunshine,
Days of winter-cheer they knew;
Better than the highest culture
Was that warm heart, kind and true.
Children gathered round that hearthstone—
Buds upon their household bough—
With their father's eagle glances,
With their mother's dusky brow.
Then the white men settled near them,
Filled her heart with angry pride,
As they looked with scorn upon her—
She, the hunter's dusky bride.

Never held she converse with them,
Only in her native tongue;
But when the malarious fever
Her white neighbors came among,
She would bring them herbs for healing,
Watch beside them day by day;
Like a Christian go among them,
Till the fever passed away.

Then she faded—slowly, surely—
From the home her love had blessed,
At the call of the Great Spirit,
And they laid her down to rest.
Not within the white man's church-yard
Did her children come to weep,
Nor among her savage kindred
Did they lay her down to sleep.

Where the wild rose bides in fragrance,
Where the first spring violets hide;
Where the river flows in sunshine,
Where the oak grove stands in pride—
Ap-uk-wa is calmly sleeping,
With her hunter by her side.

For awhile her lonely daughters
Lingered round the old home shade;
In our halls of learning studied,
In our churches sat and prayed.
Then the youngest wed a pale-face—
Wed him but to be betrayed;
All are gone, her dark-haired daughters,
Gone her scattered, wandering tribe;
But they tell, round many a fireside,
Of the hunter's Indian bride.

JEHOVAH JIRAH.

ESCAPE to the mountains, oh burdened with care!

Press thy bleeding feet over the flint-rocks bare!

Linger not in the spring-belt of blossoms and green;

In the top of the mountain the Lord shall be seen.

Take the wood of the valley, the fire and knife,

Thine offering with thee, the dearer than life;

Falter not, thy God loves the obedient best,

And after thy labor He giveth thee rest.

Up, up! Thou art weary, the tears fall fast

On the rose and the thorn, as thou clamberest past,

And thy heart goeth out in a grieving prayer,

And thy pale lips murmur, "Will He meet me there?"

O, where is the pillar of fire by night,
And the pillar of cloud in the burning light?
Let me rest in thy shadow, O, cedar and pine!
Lend me thy long arms, O, clustering vine!

Up, up from the earth; 'tis a prison of death,
And the valley is foul with its pestilent breath;
Look! Yonder's a cross, and what does it mean?
In the top of the mountain the Lord shall be seen.
There an altar was reared, and thy sin's bitter pain
Washed away in the blood of the Lamb that was slain.
For thee, up the mountain that cross hath been borne.
For thee hath the thorn-crown of anguish been worn.

The pierced hand of Jesus, thy burden undoing,
Shall quiet the dull, weary pain of thy breast,
And hope, the immortal, arising from ruin,
Shall hush all thy doubtings to faith's perfect rest.

The anthems of angels shall echo around thee,

And the great heart of Christ shall thy resting
place be;

Thou wilt wonder and weep, for the love that hath
found thee,

When thou from thy sin-fetters all shalt be free.

Though sorrow-storms rage, and life's great deep be
broken,

In the Rock that was smitten for thee thou shalt hide;
And thy soul-yearning prayer, the unwept, the unspoken,
Be answered in Jesus, "The Lord will provide."

Like nature's great calm, when the tempest is ended,

And the sea hushes down its low moan to the shore,

With the trust of a child, by love's vigil defended,

With the veteran's joy when his conflicts are o'er.

There is love when the friendships of earth are departed,

There is light when the false lights of earth have
grown dim.

There is room for the weariest, loneliest-hearted,

A joy, and a hope, and a refuge in Him.

When the Pharisees scoffed and the lawyers dissembled,

The demon confessed Him, the leper implored;

When the rulers and priests at His faithful words
trembled,

The sinner with tears washed the feet of her Lord.

When His friends' bitter sobs, and His foes' deep
revilings,

Like a troubled dream past, to His dying ears came,

The prayer of a soul from its depths of defilings,

Brought Him back to this life and His life-work
again.

When His weeping disciples rehearsed the sad story,

And the proud Roman soldiers were guarding His
grave,

He arose from His tomb and re-entered His glory

With a pledge of His power to cleanse and to save

He hath cast up a highway, the path of the holy:

No vulture hath seen it, no lion hath trod;

There find all the contrite in heart, and the lowly.

The rest that remains for the people of God.

He hath opened a fountain for cleansing and healing.

Like the "River of Life" flowing down from the
throne;

It came from His cleft heart, its death-thought
revealing,

The water to cleanse, and the blood to atone.

He hath said, and oh, precious the word He hath
spoken,

“I will not forsake till I bring thee above,
Though the tie of the father and first-born be broken,
Though the mother abandon the child of her love.”

On the mountain of God, earth's marsh-land discarded,
Where hover the death-mists of envy and strife,
There find thy lost Eden, by seraphs unguarded,
For the Man of the cross was the Master of life.

CHRIST CARETH FOR YOU.

HE careth for *you* on your suffering couch,
As the long lonely hours drag by;
When the rose-bloom is fading away from your cheek,
And the joy-light is leaving your eye;
As you think of the lillies you may not pluck,
And the green sward you may not tread;
As you think of the time they will bear you out
O'er the garden walk, cold and dead.
When you hush in a tear-wet pillow your moan,
The cry of a grieved heart, alone, alone,
Christ careth for you.

He careth, oh widow, for *you* in your grief,

When the strong arms and sheltering breast

Are gone, and the whole earth seems dreary and void,

With never a home or a rest.

When the jubilant hope of the morning is past,

With the joy of the spring-time away,

And your poor loveless life in its twilight gloom,

Is wearing to Autumn's decay,

Who noteth, with weeping, your eyes grow dim,

And your heart in its pleading for love, but Him?

Christ careth for you.

Who careth for *you*, oh ye desolate one,

When the brow of the mother is cold,

And the father hath laid him down to sleep,

In the damp of the church-yard mold;

When the snow-flakes fall on your sister's grave,

And lay white on your brother's bed;
When the smile-wreathed lips 'round the old hearth-stone
And the laugh and the song hath fled?
Like a stranger you tread through the empty hall,
And echo but answers your lonely call;—
Christ careth for you.

He careth for *you* as you wither and shrink,
'Neath the slanderer's poisonous tongue,
When only the All-searching eye can see
How the innocent heart is wrung;
As the inky spots of the spoiler spread
O'er your withering earthly fame,
And the lie of the tale-bearer holdeth it up
As a by-word and a shame,
And the Pharisaical world pass by,
He pities and loves as *you* pray to die,—
Christ careth for you.

He careth for *you* when your life-plans fail,

And hope as a mocker appears;

When the beautiful frost-work of human bliss

Dissolveth, aye, melteth to tears.

He calleth you up from your wrecks of the past,

To a hope whose foundation is sure;

Welcomes back the poor prodigal heart from its husks,

To a plentiful feast and a pure,

As the Holy One noteth the poor sparrow fall,

Even He findeth room in His great heart for all,—

Christ careth for you.

BEYOND.

I'VE a picture, thought-framed and life-tinted,

In the imagery halls of my soul;

A landscape whose bloom is immortal.

Whose inhabitants never grow old.

There are lawns, velvet hill-slopes and meadows,

More fair than a fairy-land dream,

And the fruit-bearing trees of life standing

On the banks of life's beautiful stream.

It hath flowers, like the souls of the flowers

That perished on earth, long ago;

It hath birds, like the birds of our childhood.

Whose songs we delighted to know.

It hath skies, they are brighter and purer,

There the silver-fringed clouds, and the gold,

Float slowly, as ours float above us

Into beauty-forms, fold and unfold.

It hath mountains, and lone winding valleys;

It hath forests, cool, shadowy, still;

There the long vines trail over the branches,

And the blossom-shrubs garland the hills.

Lost music-tones memory haunted.

Like the vibrating toll of a bell,

Lingered long on our hearts, growing fainter,

Then died out at last:—was it well?

Love-glances, love-words, and love-treasures,

Time's cold fingers swept them away;

He froze our grief-sobs into silence,

He changed our life-jewels to clay.

Our earth-plans all fade, as the leaves fade;

Our best soul aspirings are stilled;

Hath the great Father made us to mock us

With Eden-dreams *never* fulfilled?

I believe that no beauty can perish,

I believe no true love-charm can die;

That as melody vibrates forever,

Soul-longings are filled by and by.

I believe as an infant from weakness,

Up reaches to manhood at length;

Stepping-stones we may make of our failures,

Of our sorrows a ladder of strength.

I believe in an atmosphere purer,

We may realize Eden's dream-bliss;

To live out the soul's aspirations,

To build on the promise of this.

THE NATION'S DEAD.

O BROTHERS, these graves, they are only a share,

On this day, the day ye are keeping;

There is many a mother who knows not where

The dust of her first-born is sleeping.

In the graveyards of rich old southern towns,

Afar from the hearts that have loved them,

Where baffled Rebellion still knitteth its frowns,

And the treason-tread echoes above them.

Beyond the dead-line of the prison-pens,

Where the tried soul grew wild in its yearning,

Girt in, by the hatred of fiendish men,

Shut down, by the brazen skies' burning.

Till they babbled of northern ice and snows,
 With pulses like fire-flood leaping,
Or mournfully talked of old home repose,
 When the storm-cloud at midnight was weeping.

Where fever-lands border the river-banks,
 And malaria poisoned his pillow;
Where deadly miasma, from marshes dank,
 Crept up o'er the weed and the willow.

By the sun-heated waters of still lagoon,
 Where a dirge through the pine-bough is swelling.
There is many an unknown soldier-grave,
 No tablet life's history telling.

In the hast'ly dug trench of the carnage-plain,
 Uncoffined, unshrouded, untokened,
Like a swath by the red-handed reaper slain,
 When the war-cannon's hot mouth had spoken.

Where with hearts of oak and with still, proud lips,
The iron-clad souls of the nation
Went down at their posts, in their flame-wreathed
ships,

For freedom, a free-will oblation.

Some fell when the midnight hung black as a pall,
The tempest-cloud thick and unrifted,
Some fought till the peace-star arose on us all,
And the war-smoke divided and lifted.

Then he, with the victory-song on his lips,—
Our leader, the noblest hearted;
Our tried one, the last martyr-soul of them all,
Like a dream of the morning departed.

O, purer than lillies yet sparkling with dew,
O, sweeter than roses in bloom,
Is the memory-spray ye are weaving to-day,
To garland our patriots' tomb.

“YE MIGHT HAVE REST.”

O EARTH, so full, so full of breaking hearts,
Of white lips, hushing every cry of pain,
Of those who go to sleep with tear-wet cheeks,

And wake to weep again!

O earth, so full of feverish, thirsting souls,
Gaunt, hunger-eyed, they press us everywhere,
Their dumb lips pleading for the bread of life,

Each sigh a prayer!

Once to a sinning, sorrow-wasted crowd,
There came a voice as sweet as it could be,
A voice whose echoes have not died away,—

“Come unto me!”

He was a man of sorrow, and He knew
Each anguish note that swelled the wail of woe,
The burning pulse, the night-chill of the soul,
Its ebb and flow.

He was a healer; He could lay His hand
On the plague-smitten brow or breaking heart:
He death, disease and darkness could control,
And bid depart.

Down through the ages, mingling with the din
Of nations' tumults, was and still shall be
A tender under-tone of patient love,—
“Come unto me.”

In every age some of the toiling crowd,
Some poor sin-wearied ones have sought His breast,
Found healing and shelter from the storm,—
A place of rest.

But O, the throngs that walk the downward way,
The sin-led victims, blinded and oppressed,
Unheeding Jesus' tender, earnest call,—

Who "might have rest."

“THE SPRING BENEATH THE HILL.”

Just as twilight, softly, slowly
Folded earth in mystic spell,
Came the sound of singing water,
Through a shadowy silent dell.

All in white, I saw a maiden
Roaming at her own sweet will,
Down among the silver birches,
By the spring beneath the hill.

Kneeling there she let the water
Drop in pearl-beads through her hand,
Whispering, “Water-drops, he loves me;
Can you, *can you* understand?”

“Yes,” came answer, very sadly,

“Many a child as fair as thou
Wept her tears into my bosom
O’er a false forgotten vow.”

Bowed she by the sleeping lillies,

Kissing woke them from their dreams,
Saying, “Lillies, read my riddle:
Know ye what ‘I love thee’ means?”

But the half awakened lily

Shook the dew-drop from her cup,
Sighing, “Trust not, maiden, trust not.
We must give thy riddle up.”

Then the pine-boughs and the birches.

Then the willow and the stream,
Echoed, “Trust not, maiden, trust not;”
So I woke me from my dream.

ORA'S LUTE.

I GAZED with longing on mine idle pen,

And sighed, "Will not the Father give somewhat
Of thought, to bless the world and teach all men
To watch!"

And then with inner sight, the spiritual,

A vision saw I, though earth-eyes beheld

Naught but the dying summer in a shroud,

With rain-tears drenched, and gray, low-hanging cloud.

I saw a castle high on stormy crag,

By ocean billows washed, whose ceaseless moan

Broke day and night along the lower wall,

The white cliff-line, the time-worn, massive stone.

Down western sky, toward the western deep,

The stooping sun did gild a rising bank

Of storm-charged cloud, then over land and sea,

As in a death-pause hushed, the twilight sank.

From lattice, and from turret, and from tower,

Shone festive brightness; in the court-yard old

Great oaks were hung with glimmering lamps that lit

The gathering gloom with purple, green and gold.

There was the clang of glasses from the hall,

The high, voluptuous swell of festive song,

And white-robed maidens, stately youths and tall,

Wheeled dizzily in pleasure's waltz along.

Then, in the music-pause, I heard a sigh,

Then saw I by my side a kingly one;

I knew Him by the star upon His brow;

My Prince, the Castle-Master's only son.

I heard Him say,—His rich, deep tones did make

A hush for shame in mirth's wierd minstrelsy:—

“A messenger for yonder thoughtless crowd.”

Then I said, “Master, here am I, send me.”

“With spies mine enemies have filled these walls.

Go bid my servants watch, and fight, and pray.

My coming may be at the midnight hour,

My coming may be at the break of day.

* * * * *

Of all the palace maidens there was none

That was so plain as Ora. 'Round her heart

She drew the veil of silence day by day,

And dwelt in dream-land pensive and apart.

Her Prince beheld her thus estranged and mute,

The loneliest of all that joy-browed throng,

So He had given her a magic lute,

And poured upon her soul the gift of song.

In spirit voices that did preach to her

The lone communings of an inner life,

At breath of morning, and at the midnight hush,

In joy of spring-time and the autumn strife,

Came her instruction: "Ora, be thy lute

To love-notes sacred 'till He call for thee;

His like the holy hymning of the spheres,

His like hidden praise-harp of the sea."

Enwrapped in thought, her eyes upon the face

Of Time's great dial, in her hand the glass,

Whose golden sands fell slowly one by one,

Frail links between the future and the past:

She sat apart, but as He tarried long,

Upon her lute she poured a burdened soul,

So sadly and so sweetly every heart

Did melt like snow-wreaths into her control.

The men and maids pressed 'round her, and did praise

Her songs so much, that wild, tumultuous beat

Of grateful desire to pride-pulse rose,

Red-flushing lip and brow to fever heat.

Though "Queen of song" they crowned her, Ora's life

Grew weary with the weight of unknown fears,

Though draped in bordered mantle day by day,

She drenched her pillow nightly with her tears.

* * * * *

Then in the corridor and in the Court

I cried, "O, simple ones, hear wisdom's voice,

O, fools, be ye of understanding hearts,"

And some did jeer and mock, and some rejoice.

I saw a frank-eyed youth impetuous seek

Mid rusted armor his rust-covered shield,

His rubbish-hidden sword with unuse dimmed,

Ere drawn in conflict on the carnage field.

I saw a sad-faced man put by his cup

Of cursing, for a penitent array,

A startled maiden rush from the embrace

Of black-browed villainy, to weep and pray.

But still the dancers tread, the ring of gold,

The clang of wine-cup broke the solemn night.

Still ribald song and insane laughter told

The mad, wild revel only at its hight.

Night-folded sea, expectant as the grave,

Moaned for the tempest, hastening from afar,

Then home-bound ocean-bird fled o'er the wave,

Then lifting storm-cloud shrouded every star.

When Ora heard my message, from her brow

She tore her gem-set crown, and from her lute

Its laural wreath; through cold, numbed hands, it fell

With one long wail of anguish, and was mute.

Through lonely after-hours of that sad night,

While revelers lay drenched in drunken sleep,

Some faithful ones walked sentry through those halls,

And listened for the coming of His feet.

And watchers watched upon the corner tower,

Beside the portal and upon the wall,

With hushed heart-throbbings, but one broken heart,

Lost Ora's, was the stillest of them all.

Her ruined lute defaced and broken-stringed,

Chilled as the form that underneath it lay,

'Mid wind-sigh, and wild sea-wail and cold rain,

In lightning-gleam and shadow mute away.

THE END.



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